



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

Mountain
Plains
Region

1244 Speer Boulevard
Denver, CO 80204

APR 06 1993

Reply to
Attn. of: SFSP-194

Subject: Improper Determination of Site Eligibility in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

To: STATE AGENCY DIRECTORS - Colorado ED, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri DH,
(Special Nutrition Programs) Montana OPI, Nebraska ED, North Dakota,
South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming DHSS

Attached is a letter which describes a method for manipulating census tract data to determine SFSP site eligibility. This method seems to rest on the belief that, because children are more likely to be impoverished than adults, any given area would automatically have higher rates of child poverty than adult poverty. This, of course, is not necessarily true. Any number of variables in a given census block or tract could render this method invalid. The attached method of estimating free and reduced price eligibility is not statistically valid and may not be used in the SFSP.

Feel free to contact our office for any additional information or clarification you may need at (303) 844-0359.

Ann C. Hector

ANN C. HECTOR
Regional Director
Special Nutrition Programs

Attachment

**WASHINGTON
Food Policy
Action CENTER**

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March 10, 1993

Betty Marcelynas
Director, Child Nutrition Services
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Betty:

I am writing to ask you to authorize use of a variation of our Census data analysis to eligibilize sites for the Summer Food Service Program. This request comes out of some thinking I've been doing since participating in a workshop on use of census data at the FRAC conference. The other presenter at the workshop, Bill Cooper from Virginia, had developed a way to estimate the number of children with income below 185% of poverty using the actual number of children living below poverty and a ratio of the total persons below poverty to the total persons below 185% of poverty. I was intrigued with his methodology because the big flaw in ours -- that is, in using the percentage of total persons below 185% of poverty -- is that we know that there is a higher concentration of poverty among children than among the total population.

I met yesterday with Evie Bennett from Spokane School District. We examined the census data information provided by Sammamish data (the percentage of total persons living below 185% of poverty) as well as school lunch data for each school she is considering for SFSP. Three sites where the district is offering either summer child care or remedial programs did not look immediately eligible. I took a second look at data for the three schools.

One of the schools, Adams Elementary, in April of last year had 45% of enrollment eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The census data for the block group where the school is located showed 45% as well. However, when I used Bill Cooper's variation based on the number of children in poverty in the block group, I came up with 53% of children in the block group living below 185% of poverty.

This is how I did it: I found the number of children under 18 with income below 100% of poverty (36). Then I found the number of persons with income below 100% of poverty (56) and the number of persons with income below 185% of poverty (590). The ratio between these two

figures is 6.9, that is, 590 is 6.9 times 86. Then I multiplied this ratio factor by the number of children under 18 in poverty (36) and came up with 248. This figure (248) is 53% of the children in the block group. It is probably a low estimate, however, because we know that there is a higher rate of poverty for children than for adults.

I'd appreciate it if you would let me know if you think this is an acceptable estimate on which to base site eligibility for SFSP. I, obviously, think that it is. If you agree, I may ask Rick Schweitzer at Sammamish Data to run a set of tables providing this data which we can use now and, in a more inclusive manner, next year to help expand SFSP. By the way, I have yet to receive any satisfactory maps from Rick so we need to keep after that -- don't pay him for any maps yet, though!

Thanks. I know this calculation stuff gets confusing, so give me a call if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Linda Stone
Project Director